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Présentation des résultats d'une enquête entreprise en septembre 1977 dans quinze écoles de la Commission des écoles protestantes du grand Montréal qui offraient un programme d'immersion précoce en français. Il s'agissait de connaître les raisons qui amenaient certains élèves, au cours du primaire, à quitter le programme d'immersion française pour un autre type de programme d'enseignement.

Les directeurs de chacune des quinze écoles primaires ont reçu des formulaires à remplir pour chaque étudiant quittant le programme d'immersion française au cours de l'année 1977-1978. Les informations recueillies portaient sur: 1. les caractéristiques de l'élève (sexe, langue maternelle, pays d'origine, durée du stage en classe d'immersion); 2. le programme vers lequel se dirige l'élève; 3. les raisons de l'abandon du programme d'immersion française. Treize écoles sur quinze ont accepté de remplir les formulaires.

Au total, 230 élèves sur les 3359 inscrits dans des classes d'immersion dans ces écoles ont décidé d'abandonner ce programme, soit 6,8%. C'est en première année que le pourcentage d'abandon est le plus grand (11%); il se stabilise aux environs de 7% pour les autres années, sauf les cinquième et sixième où il descend à 3%. La principale raison mentionnée est le changement de domicile (130 cas sur 230). Différents problèmes d'apprentissage expliquent, pour la majorité des cas, les autres départs.

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Survey of Students Switching Out of the Early Immersion Program 1977-1978.

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Survey of Students Switching Out of the Early Immersion Program 1977-1978

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In September 1977 a survey was undertaken in schools of the P.S.B.G.M., which have early French immersion programs (15 in total) in order to document the number of students switching out of the immersion program and their reason(s) for doing so. The present report is a summary of the findings of that survey.

Procedures

The 15 early immersion schools were provided with Program Switch Forms which were to be filled out by the principal for each student who left the program. The schools which returned forms were Beechwood, Cecil Newman, Courtland Park, Edinburgh, Gardenview, Meadowbrook, Riverview, Roslyn, Westminster, Westpark, Willingdon and Willowdale. Adjustments were made in enrollment figures to account for the two immersion schools which did not participate. Different types of information about the switching students were sought in the form of: (1) background information (sex, native language, country of birth, and number of years in immersion); (2) program to which the student was switching (regular English, all French, SLD class or EMR class), either in a public or private school; and (3) reasons for the switch (dissatisfaction with aspects of the immersion school, student characteristics

which were impeding success, such as language or emotional problems, and reasons related to the student's family, such as moving).

Results

1) Background Information

Inspection of Table 1 indicates that more students switched out of immersion during the K to 3 years, when instruction via French is most extensive, than in the highest grades. It is particularly interesting to note that the switching was most frequent in grade 1 and relatively stable, in absolute numbers at least, in the other primary grades (K, 2 and 3). It is also interesting to note that appreciably more boys than girls switched out during K to 3, with the ratio of boys to girls levelling off by grade 4. We have no explanation for this sex difference.

In order to put these data into perspective, it is necessary to look at them in terms of the enrollment in immersion at each grade level. When the number of students who switched from immersion is expressed as a percentage of enrollment in immersion, making adjustment for the two schools which did not participate, it is evident that the switching rate was highest in grade 1, lower and relatively stable in the other primary grades (K, 2 and 3) and lowest in grades 5 and 6. It is probably to be expected that switching will diminish in the higher elementary grades since the difference between the French content of the regular program and the immersion program is relatively small in these grades.

Almost all of the students who switched had been born

in Canada and were native-English speaking. Although not indicated in Table 1, it was found that the vast majority of the students had been in immersion since the very beginning, i.e., kindergarten. A handful of students (5 in total) had entered the program in grade 1.

Thus, the only distinguishing feature of the switching students according to the questions we asked was that more boys than girls switched.

2) New School

At all grade levels the most popular alternative to immersion was a regular English program in a public school system. Thus, it does not appear that private schools or French schools were popular alternatives to the immersion program of the P.S.B.G.M.

3) Reasons for Switching

Dissatisfaction with the school (either due to transportation, teaching personnel or the French/English content of the program) was a relatively infrequently reported reason for switching from immersion. Student characteristics and family reasons were reported much more frequently. Within the category "student characteristics", there was no particular tendency for one item to be reported more frequently than another. It is interesting to note here that the schools reported that in cases of switching which involved student problems, formal testing was carried out in the majority of cases in order to document more precisely the type of problem faced by the student. The question then arises whether the switch brought about the hoped for remediation of the

student's problem.

It would be interesting to follow up the students in the primary grades who have been switched out of the immersion program because of these reasons.

Family reasons were the most frequently reported causes for switching, at least in the primary grades. In percentage terms, a family move or a planned family move accounted for 50% or more of the stated reasons for switching at all grade levels except 5 and 6: K: 55%; 1: 52%; 2: 69%; 3: 46%; 4: 57%; 5: 33% and 6: 36%. Clearly, cases of switching for these reasons are beyond the jurisdiction of the schools.

Discussion

Two questions are raised by this survey. One concerns the efficacy of switching students in immersion who have problems to the regular English program. Related to this issue is the feasibility and desirability of offering certain remedial services within immersion to such students rather than requiring students in need of these services to drop out of immersion.

The second question concerns advice to parents who intend to move to neighborhoods where immersion programs may not be available and as a result want to get their child "ready" for the regular English program. While many parents may wish to switch their child to the English program as soon as they have knowledge of an impending move, it may be advisable to keep children in an immersion class somewhat longer. This policy may be advisable in order to allow the student to fully acquire and consolidate skills in French before introducing a new language system.

There is some empirical evidence that English children will transfer language skills from French to English; however, firm control of French skills may be necessary to maximize transference. Pre-mature exposure to a second symbol system may confuse a child. In any event, in view of the prevalence of children switching from immersion because of family moves, this issue may warrant further systematic thought.

GRADE LEVEL

	Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) Sex:							
Male	32	51	24	19	14	5	4
Female	8	22	16	13	12	6	4
Total:	40	73	40	32	26	11	8
Enrollment	610	641	628	493	397	329	261
Percentage Switching	7%	11%	6%	6%	7%	3%	3%
2) Country of Birth:							
Canada	38	49	32	26	21	8	6
Other		3	1				
3) Native Language:							
English	20	45	30	24	18	7	5
Other		5	1				
4) Student is switching to:							
a) Public School							
(i) English program	15	45	23	18	14	7	4
(ii) French program	1	2	2	1	1		
(iii) SLD class							
(iv) EMR class							
b) Private School							
(i) English program	8		1			2	
(ii) French program							
(iii) SLD class							
(iv) EMR class							
DO NOT KNOW	13	10	7	8	8	1	2

	GRADE LEVEL						
	Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) Reasons for Switching							
a) Dissatisfaction with school:							
(i) Transportation							
Not Available							
Inadequate							
School closer to home		1			1		
(ii) Teacher(s)							
Homeroom	1				1		
French (where not homeroom)							
(iii) Amount of French in program							
Too little							
Too much	1				1	1	
(iv) No English program in K.	2	2	—	—	—	—	—
Subtotal:	4	3			3	1	
b) Student cannot cope with immersion because of:	1.						
(i) language or speech disability	(1)	2				1	
(ii) learning disability	1	5(3)	1(1)	5(1)	4(1)	1	1
(iii) English language disability	2	3	2	3(1)			1
(iv) intellectual difficulties	3	2(2)	2	2(1)	(1)	1(1)	1
(v) emotional problems	2	4(2)	3	3(1)	2(1)	1	2
(vi) negative attitude toward French	4	6	1	1	1	1	1
Subtotal: [2]	13	29	10	18	10	6	6

	GRADE LEVEL						
	Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) Reasons for Switching (cont'd)							
c) Family Reasons:							
(i) family moved	23	33	20	14	10	3	3
(ii) family will move	1	6	7	2	7	0	1
(iii) no parental support	3	3	2	1	0	0	1
(iv) reaction to "Law 101"	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal:	27	43	29	17	17	3	5

1. Entries in parentheses indicate number of cases where no formal psychometric testing was carried out to assess the student's difficulty.

2. Subtotals do not always equal the total number of cases (male + female) due to incomplete responding and to multiple responses for the same case.